



In the Matter of:

Wireline Competition Bureau Seeking Comments on E-rate Category Two
Comments on E-rate Category Two

WC Docket No. 13-184

We are pleased to be able to provide input on the impact of having access to secure and sufficient funding for our library WiFi and internal connections. Before the E-rate Modernization in 2014, virtually no Georgia libraries received funds for Priority 2 services. Unless we were at a 90% discount rate, we could assume there would be no funding left after all requests for internet access were funded. Only 10 out of Georgia's 63 library systems are currently at a 90% discount rate.

In contrast, over the last two years, (35) of Georgia's (63) library systems have applied for Cat2 funding and have received \$2,071,400.97. In support of this effort, the Georgia Public Library Service has paid in matching funds \$312,991.74.

We consider the mission of libraries to be the only place in our society where a patron can gain access to non-sponsored, discoverable knowledge with an expectation of privacy. This most foundational of services is severely hindered if our libraries cannot afford to provide reliable WiFi and Internet service to patrons.

To use an example, our Cherokee Regional Library System in North Georgia has received so far \$48,437.78 in Category 2 funds and \$10,059.16 from GPLS in matching funds. With the infrastructure improvements and additional hardware, the library system is now able to bridge the digital divide for their community.

They offer their patrons the ability to apply for jobs, to renew important services that are online-only, to fill out their income tax forms and get their financial aid forms in by the deadline. The communities of Chickamauga, Trenton, LaFayette and Rossville Georgia all rely on the Cherokee Regional Library System to provide reliable, strong WiFi signals in order to not be left behind.

We commend you for committing \$2.30 (\$5.00 for a selected category of larger urban and suburban libraries) per square foot as a budget for our libraries to have access to these essential Category 2 funds that eluded almost all of our systems for almost 20 years.

We have full confidence that our libraries will continue to file for this funding in order to support the upgrading of equipment and planning for infrastructure upgrades. Please maintain this critical funding through the full five year budget period as adopted during the 2014 Modernization. Our communities depend on that funding.

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